

ORAL QUESTION—KEVIN O'REILLY, MLA FRAME LAKE

QUESTION 233-18(3): FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDS FOR HOUSING

MARCH 9, 2018

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are also on spending money on housing, but they are not for my friend the Minister of Finance or for the Minister of Housing Corporation. They're for the Minister of Infrastructure, because he helped announce \$570 million in federal infrastructure funding earlier this week.

In our Committee of the Whole review of the NWT Housing Corporation, I asked questions of the Housing Corporation on what proportion of the new funds will be applied to the \$67 million cost of taking our housing out of core need. I looked at the funding announcements. Some of those pots of money could certainly be used for housing. I am asking the Minister of Infrastructure whether he can confirm what proportion of the federal Infrastructure funds he announced earlier this week will be applied to addressing housing core needs, and if no funds, why not? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct. There is no funding for housing under the bilateral that we signed earlier this week with the federal Minister, but the federal government is going to be announcing other streams under the Investing in Canada plan that will provide funding for housing for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister for that. I look forward to these other announcements. I sort of anticipated that he would say that the \$36 million over 10 years under the National Housing Strategy would cover off our housing needs, but, of course, that small amount really can't help us with our core housing needs, which have been calculated at \$67 million. Where are the funds going to come from, and why can't we use some of the federal infrastructure funding that the Minister announced earlier this week?

Can the Minister explain whether there are any legal or funding guideline requirements that prevent us from applying for and using these new federal infrastructure funds for housing, or is this a political decision, one that Cabinet has already made?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: The \$180 billion in infrastructure funding provided by the Investing in Canada plan is being delivered under a series of different funds, but there are a bunch of different criteria and eligibility requirements around this for federal outcomes for project eligibility, and the agreement that we signed, unfortunately, does not provide any opportunity for investment in housing.

MR. O'REILLY: I would like to thank the Minister for that. If there is some way that he could share the funding guidelines or more information about that with me, I would appreciate that very much.

Can the Minister tell us whether any of the newly announced federal infrastructure funding will be allocated to or delivered through the Arctic Energy Alliance, and if so, how much and over what period of time?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: In total, with the \$760 million that we are going to be leveraging with our portion and the federal portion, a significant amount of this is eligible for energy projects through the Northwest Territories, and we will be going through those specific details once we start getting into more detail of our applications around this money. There are also going to be other pots of money available for these sorts of things under the Pan-Canadian Framework for Clean Growth, and there will be an opportunity for energy projects in there.

As I stated, I think, earlier this week in the House, around the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund and our application that we have put in, there is going to be additional support for Arctic Energy Alliance, and hopefully we are going to hear back on that in the coming weeks.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I'd like to thank the Minister for that response. Again, my questions are really focused on the funding announcement that he made in the Great Hall here earlier this week. I know there are other funding pots out there, but I want to know about the \$570 million that was announced earlier this week. Can the Minister tell us whether there is a full plan to spend this money and if that plan can be made public? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: The projects that we have lined up for 2018-2019, the Department of Infrastructure expects to prepare and submit to Infrastructure Canada early in this fiscal year.

The other thing I guess other Members maybe didn't realize is that, when we signed the agreement here on Wednesday, we were the very first ones in Canada to sign our bilateral agreement, so we are the first out of the gate. With that going forward, the projects that we want to do early in this coming fiscal year, we are going to have to come back for supplementary funding in the House in the May sitting for the projects that are moving forward. We are going to be going through the regular capital plan process going forward for the next projects in the coming years coming out, but I plan to keep MLAs informed on where we are in this process going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.